



## **DOMESTIC TRADE GRANT PROGRAM**

### *Guidelines*

#### **Introduction**

The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is launching a state-wide grant program to help Maine's businesses sell more goods and services to locations within the United States, including Maine. Funding is limited to pandemic-impacted industries and for activities that are directly related to increasing access to markets and expanding sales activities.

The funding will be delivered in two competitive rounds, one in October 2023 and another early in 2024. This document provides comprehensive guidance for applicants.

DECD issued a competitive Request for Proposal in 2023 in accordance with State of Maine procurement policies to solicit bids for a company or organization to assist DECD with the administration of this grant program. Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) responded to this RFP and was selected. Even though GPCOG has a regional focus, this grant opportunity is for Maine businesses throughout the entire State, and no preference will be given to businesses within the GPCOG service area of Cumberland County.

#### **About the Opportunity**

The Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan (MJRP) is Governor Mills' plan, approved by the Legislature, to invest nearly \$1 billion in federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to improve the lives of Maine people and families, help businesses, create good-paying jobs, and build an economy poised for future prosperity.

By drawing heavily on recommendations from the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee and the State's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy, the Jobs Plan addresses known, systemic challenges that have constrained Maine's ability to grow and thrive.

Many small businesses lack the necessary resources to expand their customer bases. This was exacerbated by the disruptions caused by the pandemic. In response, a domestic trade program was developed at DECD to help small- to mid-sized businesses in Maine identify and access new markets by providing market data, marketing support, and direct financial support to businesses.

#### **Eligibility**

Financial support is only available to the following industries negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Agriculture - food and beverage
- Clean energy
- Construction
- Fishing, Seafood, and Aquaculture
- Forestry and forest products
- Information services
- Logistics, Transportation, and Warehousing

- Manufacturing
- Retail (includes wholesale)

All applicant businesses and organizations (501c3, 501c6, and Tribes) must have significant operations in Maine (be headquartered in Maine and have a minimum of 50% of employees and contract employees based in Maine), have the capacity to sell goods and services where at least 51% of the manufactured value of the product or the performance value of the service will be produced in Maine, and have a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) number. For more information about UEI numbers and how to obtain one for free, see our FAQs or [click here](#).

Eligible applicants should be able to attest that they are NOT:

- Debarred or otherwise suspended from receiving federal funds.
- Engaged in illegal activity.
- Engaged in marijuana or cannabis-related activities.
- Principally engaged in promoting religion.
- Primarily engaged in political or lobbying activities.
- A private club that limits the number of memberships for reasons other than capacity or a business that restricts patronage.

### **Qualified Activities**

In general, the program is intended to support projects and activities that will expand the market for Maine's businesses to sell goods and services. These project-based activities may include:

- 1) Sales Channel support
  - a. Developing or expanding a sales platform
  - b. Creating media promotional campaigns and materials
  - c. Developing of B2B strategies
  - d. Implementing retail enhancements, packaging design, or other tactics
- 2) Trade Shows: preparing displays and materials to participate in trade shows, and conducting research for lead generation, industry, or product efforts.
- 3) Marketing strategy: working with consultants or other providers to create or refine a plan for increased domestic sales
- 4) Technical Assistance and other Trade Assistance

The intent is that the funding is limited to discrete, actionable, measurable, time-limited, and results-oriented projects that bolster recovery from Pandemic-related impacts to the eligible industries. All businesses and organizations that receive funding will be surveyed to determine if sales increased due to receiving assistance from Maine's domestic trade recovery grant program.

### **Ineligible Activities**

In general, ineligible costs include those outside the scope of the funding purpose and any other restrictions as defined by the awarding entity. Specifically, no funds may be expended for:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Lobbying efforts
- Cash donations to other entities
- Travel costs unrelated to the purpose of the grant award
- Goods or services for personal use
- Debt service or replenishments of rainy-day funds
- Depreciation expense
- Entertainment
  
- Fines, Penalties, Damages and other Settlements
- Satisfaction of settlements from judgement
- Uses that contravene or violate the [American Rescue Plan Act, 2CFR200 Uniform Guidance](#) conflicts of interest requirements, and other federal, state, and local regulations

Services or programs must not include terms or conditions that undermine efforts to stop COVID-19 or discourage compliance with recommendations and CDC guidelines.

Funds cannot be used to meet the non-federal match for other federal programs.

### **Period of Performance**

The project period will run from the date of the award until December 31, 2025. All projects must be completed, and all associated grant money must be spent by December 31, 2025.

### **Application Support**

The frequently asked questions for the program are located [here](#). For additional information or support, you may email [DomesticTrade@gpcog.org](mailto:DomesticTrade@gpcog.org) or call 207-387-2919 to request additional technical assistance or language translation services.

### **HOW TO APPLY**

DECD anticipates two funding cycles, one in mid-October and another in early 2024. Applications must be received before 11:59 pm on the date of the deadline. In each cycle, we invite applications for two types of funding:

- 1) **Support to businesses.** Each business may apply for support ranging between \$10,000 to \$250,000. The request must not exceed the maximum award based on the size of the business, measured by the combined number of full-time employees and contractors (see chart below).

Number of FTE	Maximum Award
0-1	\$25,000
2-9	\$50,000
10-49	\$75,000
50-249	\$100,000
250-499	\$250,000

Collaborative Initiative	\$250,000
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- 2) **Support for collaborative initiatives.** These efforts must be spearheaded by a single applicant and can be organized around industry focus, geographic area, or aligned strategies across multiple impacted and related industries. The projects must have direct involvement in an eligible industry, with dedicated efforts made to collect and aggregate data on increased sales. This one-time funding is intended to jump-start or advance initiatives that will be sustained beyond the end of the project period on December 31, 2025. The requests can range from \$25,000 to \$250,000.

### **Required Documentation**

- 1) All businesses and organizations applying for funding must have a **Unique Entity Identification number**. You may contact your local Maine APEX Accelerator (formerly PTAC) office for technical assistance or read the directions and process at [SAM.Gov](https://sam.gov).
- 2) Each applicant must provide a North Atlantic Industry Classification System (**NAICS**) code that corresponds to their primary line of business. The [United States Census](https://www.census.gov/naics/) has a search tool that uses keywords. The NAICS code must correspond to the eligible industries listed in the eligibility section.
- 3) A prepared, electronic W-9 in the event your business/organization is selected for a grant (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>).
- 4) Each applicant must supply a project description and budget of a discrete, actionable, and measurable project that fits one of the four allowable activities. Templates for project description and budget can be found [here](#). Project descriptions must include the project's timeframe and identify a specific project end date. All projects must be complete December 31, 2025.
- 5) Each applicant will have to attest to several statements in the application.

### **Evaluation Of Applications**

- 1) Each application will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness.
- 2) Each application will be scored on several factors including:
  - (a) Capacity to implement activities
  - (b) Strength and detail of Project Plan
  - (c) Potential to increase domestic sales of goods and services
  - (d) Location of business. Higher scores will be awarded to businesses and organizations in economically disadvantaged areas according to the [United States Census Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) cross referenced with the per capita income by county in 2021.
  - (e) Access to previous MJRP funding. Higher scores will be awarded to businesses and organizations that haven't previously accessed funding through the Maine Job & Recovery Plan.



## **Awardee Requirements**

- 1) All projects must be completed, and all associated grant money must be spent by December 2025.
- 2) Each awardee is expected to report on the grant award progress by completing two follow-up questionnaires: one 6 months after the award is granted and one 12 months after the award.
- 3) Each awardee is expected to return any unused funds 90 days after the project end date.
- 4) By accepting the grant award, the awardee gives the Maine Department of Community and Economic Development permission to use its name, likeness, logo, and project in any press releases or other marketing efforts pertaining to the Domestic Trade Grants.